

Adjectīva

Like adjectives in English, Latin adjectives modify substantives: the **large** house, the **small** child.

There are two types of adjective declensions: adjectives of the **a-/o-declension** and those of the **third declension**, which in turn are divided into **consonantal** and **i-stems**.

Adjectives can show comparison, that is, they form a **comparative** (from **comparāre** “compare”) degree, e.g., “faster,” and a **superlative** (from **superferre** “carry over or beyond, surpass”), e.g., “fastest.”

Adjectives form the basis of many **adverbs** (< **ad-verbium** = “belonging to the verb/word”), which modify a **verbal** action in answer to the question “how does something happen?”: e.g., “They are going **fast**.” (*How are they going? Fast.*)

However, in contrast to adjectives, adverbs are not declined; they are unchangeable. Still, they can form comparative and superlative degrees.

General Remarks:

Latin has three species of adjectives: those of **three endings**, which have separate forms for each of the three genders; those of **two endings**, which have one form for masculine and feminine, and a separate one for the neuter; and those of **one ending**, which has only one form for the nominative singular of all three genders.

Adjectives agree in case, number and gender with the substantive to which they belong; they are **congruent** with it.

templa magna	large temples	nom./acc. pl. n.
puellae audācēs	bold girls	nom. pl f.

Adjectives can be used either **attributively** or **predicatively**: as attributes they become a property of a substantive; when they are used predicatively,

the predicate answers the question, “as/like what?” — that is, they say something about the state in which the subject undertakes an action:

Liberī mæstī in lūdum eunt.

Attributively: The sad children go to school.

Predicatively: The children go to school sadly (“as sad children”)

In both cases the adjective agrees with its substantive in case, number and gender.

Adjectives of the a-/o-declension:

Adjectives of the a-/o-declension are declined like the substantives of the **a-** and **o-** declensions, respectively. This class includes the adjectives of three endings in **-us**, **-a**, **-um** as well as the adjectives ending in **-er**, **-(e)ra**, **-(e)rum**.

Adjectives in -us, -a, -um:

Example: **magnus, -a, -um** large, great, significant

Singular	m.	f.	n.
Nom.	<i>magnus</i>	<i>magna</i>	<i>magnum</i>
Gen.	<i>magnī</i>	<i>magnæ</i>	<i>magnī</i>
Dat.	<i>magnō</i>	<i>magnæ</i>	<i>magnō</i>
Acc.	<i>magnum</i>	<i>magnam</i>	<i>magnum</i>
Abl.	<i>magnō</i>	<i>magnā</i>	<i>magnō</i>
Plural			
Nom.	<i>magnī</i>	<i>magnæ</i>	<i>magna</i>
Gen.	<i>magnōrum</i>	<i>magnārum</i>	<i>magnōrum</i>
Dat.	<i>magnīs</i>	<i>magnīs</i>	<i>magnīs</i>
Acc.	<i>magnōs</i>	<i>magnās</i>	<i>magna</i>
Abl.	<i>magnīs</i>	<i>magnīs</i>	<i>magnīs</i>

Notes:

As in the o-declension substantives, the voc. sing. m. has its own form:

magne.

The perfect participle passive (PPP), the future participle active (FPA), the gerund and the gerundive are declined like the adjectives of the a-/o-declension in **-us, -a, -um**:

Example: **agere, agō, ēgī, āctum** drive, do, treat, act

PPP:	āctus, ācta, āctum	FPA:	āctūrus, -a, -um
Gen. sg.	āctī, āctæ, āctī	Gen. sg.	āctūrī, -æ, -ī, etc.
Gerund	agendī	Gerundive:	agendus, -a, -um
Dat. sg.	agendō	Gen. sg.	agendī, -æ, -ī

Adjectives in **-er, -(e)ra, -(e)rum**

These adjectives are declined like **magnus, -a, -um**, with the exception of the nom. sg. Only a small part of this group contains **-e-** in all cases; all others have it only in the nom./voc. sg. m. Always memorize the nom. f. and n. along with it!

All cases retain the **-e-** in, e.g.:

liber, libera, liberum	free	Gen. sg.	liberī, liberæ, liberī
miser, misera, miserum	wretched	Gen. sg.	miserī, miseræ, miserī

The **-e-** appears only in the nom. and voc. sg. m. in, e.g.:

pulcher, pulchra, pulchrum	pretty	Gen. sg.	pulchrī, pulchræ, pulchrī
āter, ātra, ātrum	black	Gen. sg.	ātrī, ātræ, ātrī

Adjectives of the third declension:

Besides the adjectives of the a-/o-declension, there are also adjectives of the third declension. They are divided into consonantal and i-stems.

Consonantal stems

Relatively few adjectives belong to the consonantal stems. Their nominative singular has only one ending for all three genders. The characteristic of this class is found in the abl. sg., the gen. pl. and, in the neuter, the nom./acc. pl.: **-e, -um, -a**

Example: **pauper, -eris** poor

Singular	m.	f.	n.
Nom.	<i>pauper</i>	<i>pauper</i>	<i>pauper</i>
Gen.	<i>pauperis</i>	<i>pauperis</i>	<i>pauperis</i>
Dat.	<i>pauperī</i>	<i>pauperī</i>	<i>pauperī</i>
Acc.	<i>pauperem</i>	<i>pauperem</i>	<i>pauper</i>
Abl.	<i>paupere</i>	<i>paupere</i>	<i>paupere</i>
Plural			
Nom.	<i>pauperēs</i>	<i>pauperēs</i>	<i>paupera</i>
Gen.	<i>pauperum</i>	<i>pauperum</i>	<i>pauperum</i>
Dat.	<i>pauperibus</i>	<i>pauperibus</i>	<i>pauperibus</i>
Acc.	<i>pauperēs</i>	<i>pauperēs</i>	<i>paupera</i>
Abl.	<i>pauperibus</i>	<i>pauperibus</i>	<i>pauperibus</i>

Consonantal-stem adjectives are always listed in dictionaries with their genitive singular:

pauper, -eris	poor	dīves, -itis	rich
vetus, -eris	old	particeps, -cipis	participating
prīnceps, -ipis	first, chief	superstes, -stitis	surviving

i-stems

With the exception of the consonantal stems, almost all of the remaining third-declension adjectives belong to the i-stems. As in the substantives, the characteristics of the i-stems are (1) an abl. sg. in **-ī**, (2) a gen. pl. in **-ium** and (3), in the neuter, the nom./acc. pl., **-ia**. In contrast to the substantives, the acc. sg. m./f. has the ending **-em** instead of **-im**.

However, the adjectives of the i-stems do not all look alike. They are divided into three groups:

	Triple-ending adjectives	Double-ending adjectives	Single-ending adjectives
	<i>celer, celeris, celere</i> swift, quick, fast	<i>fortis, fortis, forte</i> brave, strong	<i>fēlix, fēlix, fēlix</i> lucky, fortunate, happy
m.	<i>equus celer</i> the fast horse	<i>mīles fortis</i> the brave soldier	<i>vir fēlix</i> the happy man
f.	<i>nāvis celeris</i> the fast ship	<i>fēmīna fortis</i> the brave woman	<i>fēmīna fēlix</i> the happy woman
n.	<i>tēlum celere</i> the swift spear	<i>animal forte</i> the brave creature	<i>ōmen fēlix</i> a lucky omen

Example: **celer, -is, -e** fast

Singular	m.	f.	n.
Nom.	celer	celeris	celere
Gen.	celeris	celeris	celeris
Dat.	celerī	celerī	celerī
Acc.	celerem	celerem	celere
Abl.	celerī	celerī	celerī
Plural			
Nom.	celerēs	celerēs	celeria
Gen.	celerium	celerium	celerium
Dat.	celeribus	celeribus	celeribus
Acc.	celerēs	celerēs	celeria
Abl.	celeribus	celeribus	celeribus

Example: **fortis, -e** brave

Singular	m.	f.	n.
Nom.	fortis	fortis	forte
Gen.	fortis	fortis	fortis
Dat.	fortī	fortī	fortī
Acc.	fortem	fortem	forte
Abl.	fortī	fortī	fortī
Plural			
Nom.	fortēs	fortēs	fortia
Gen.	fortium	fortium	fortium
Dat.	fortibus	fortibus	fortibus
Acc.	fortēs	fortēs	fortia
Abl.	fortibus	fortibus	fortibus

Example: **fēlix, -icis** happy, lucky

Singular	m.	f.	n.
Nom.	fēlix	fēlix	fēlix
Gen.	fēlicis	fēlicis	fēlicis
Dat.	fēlicī	fēlicī	fēlicī
Acc.	fēlicem	fēlicem	fēlix
Abl.	fēlicī	fēlicī	fēlicī
Plural			
Nom.	fēlicēs	fēlicēs	fēlicia
Gen.	fēlicium	fēlicium	fēlicium
Dat.	fēlicibus	fēlicibus	fēlicibus
Acc.	fēlicēs	fēlicēs	fēlicia
Abl.	fēlicibus	fēlicibus	fēlicibus

In dictionaries, i-stem adjectives are generally listed as follows:

3 endings (nom. sg. m./f./n.)	ācer, ācris, ācre	sharp	celer, -is, -e	fast
2 endings (nom. sg. m./n.)	facilis, -e	easy	fortis, -e	brave
1 ending (+ gen. sg.)	fēlix, -icis	happy	prūdēns, -entis	smart

Notes:

The **single-ending** present participle active (PPA) is declined like the **i-stems**. Example: **agere, agō, ēgī, āctum** “drive, act” — PPA: **agēns** (“acting”), gen. sg. **agentis**, etc. If the PPA is used as a pure adjective, it follows the paradigm: **ab excellentī orātōre** (by an excellent orator) or **ā sapientī virō** (by a wise man [as opposed to a boy

or a woman]). But when used as a **verb** or a **noun**, its ablative singular ends in **-e**: **excellente orātōre** (while the orator was excelling) or **ā sapiente** (by a philosopher).

Comparison of Adjectives:

The comparative and superlative degrees of adjectives are used to establish comparisons. An activity, a creature or an object is compared in some characteristic to another one, or is emphasized more strongly, e.g.:

the small chair	the smaller chair	the smallest chair
The chair is small.	The chair is smaller.	The chair is smallest.

As in English, these degrees have the following names:

Basic level: the small chair	positive
Intensified level: the smaller chair	comparative
Top level: the smallest chair	superlative

These additional forms of the adjective are likewise declined and match their substantives in case, number and gender. It is important to keep this congruence in mind.

Besides **regular comparison**, followed by almost all adjectives, a few adjectives have **irregular comparison** (described later).

Comparative

To form the regular comparison of adjectives, add to the stem the ending **-ior** for the feminine and masculine, and **-ius** for the neuter.

Positive	Gen. sg.	Stem	Comparative
altus high, deep	altī	alt-	altior, -ius higher, deeper
pulcher beautiful	pulchrī	pulchr-	pulchrior, -ius more beautiful
prūdēns smart	prūdentis	prūdent-	prūdentior, -ius smarter
fortis brave	fortis	fort-	fortior, -ius braver
celer fast	celeris	celer-	celerior, -ius faster

The comparative is declined like the adjectives of the consonantal stems (of the third declension). Note: All adjectives follow this same paradigm, no matter which declension their positive degree may belong to.

Example: **altus, -a, -um** high, deep => **altior, -ius** higher, deeper

Singular	m.	f.	n.
Nom.	altior	altior	altius
Gen.	altiōris	altiōris	altiōris
Dat.	altiōrī	altiōrī	altiōrī
Acc.	altiōrem	altiōrem	altius
Abl.	altiōre	altiōre	altiōre
Plural			
Nom.	altiōrēs	altiōrēs	altiōra
Gen.	altiōrum	altiōrum	altiōrum
Dat.	altiōribus	altiōribus	altiōribus
Acc.	altiōrēs	altiōrēs	altiōra
Abl.	altiōribus	altiōribus	altiōribus

Use of the Comparative:

1. The comparative can be used for direct comparison. When so used, it takes an object of comparison introduced by **quam** (“than”). In English we translate it accordingly with a comparative.

Hæc turris altior quam illa est. This tower is higher than that one.

Instead of being introduced by **quam**, the compared substantive can also take the ablative case, which is then called the **ablātivus comparātiōnis**: **Hæc turris altior illā est.**

2. The comparative can also be used alone, without a comparison. In this case it can be translated with “rather, very,” or “quite”

Mōns altior est. The mountain is rather high.

3. ***quam quī*** (or ***quam ut***) is used after a comparative in such sentences as

Fortior est quam quī (ut) effugiat.

He is too brave to run away.

Literally, “He is braver than the sort of man who would run away”
or “He is too brave for the result to be that he runs away.”

Superlative

The superlative degree of most adjectives is formed by adding the ending ***-issimus, -issima, -issimum*** to the stem.

Positive	Stem	Superlative
<i>altus, -a, -um</i> high, deep	<i>alt-</i>	<i>altissimus, -a, -um</i> highest, deepest
<i>gravis, -e</i> heavy	<i>grav-</i>	<i>gravissimus, -a, -um</i> heaviest
<i>prūdēns, -entis</i> smart	<i>prūdent-</i>	<i>prūdentissimus, -a, -um</i> smartest

Stems ending in liquids (r/l): However, adjectives ending in ***-er*** (a/o-declension and consonantal stems) form their superlative with ***-rimus, -rima, -rimum***. Adjectives ending in ***-lis*** add ***-limus, -lima, -limum*** to the stem.

Positive	Stem	Superlative
asper, -era, -erum raw, rough	asper-	asperrimus, -a, -um rawest, roughest
ācer, -cris, -cre sharp	ācer-	ācerrimus, -a, -um sharpest
facilis, -e easy	facil-	facillimus, -a, -um easiest

The superlative of all adjectives is declined following the paradigm of the a-/o-declension:

Singular	m.	f.	n.
Nom.	altissimus	altissima	altissimum
Gen.	altissimī	altissimæ	altissimī
Dat.	altissimō	altissimæ	altissimō
Acc.	altissimum	altissimam	altissimum
Abl.	altissimō	altissimā	altissimō
Plural			
Nom.	altissimī	altissimæ	altissima
Gen.	altissimōrum	altissimārum	altissimōrum
Dat.	altissimīs	altissimīs	altissimīs
Acc.	altissimōs	altissimās	altissima
Abl.	altissimīs	altissimīs	altissimīs

Use of the Superlative:

The superlative can be used as the highest form of comparison — that is, as the superlative in a literal sense. In English it can be translated as follows:

altissimus, -a, -um highest, deepest

If it is used to emphasize something or to express the highest degree of a characteristic, it should be translated with “very,” “extremely,” “totally,” etc.:

altissimus, -a, -um very (extremely, enormously) high, deep

In this function the superlative is termed **elative**.

When the superlative is preceded by ***quam***, it means “as ... possible”:

quam altissimus as high/deep as possible

Irregular Comparison:

A few adjectives form their comparatives and superlatives from a stem different from that of the positive degree. These must be memorized.

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
bonus, -a, -um good	melior, -ius better	optimus, -a, -um best
malus, -a, -um bad	pējor, pējus worse	pessimus, -a, -um worst
magnus, -a, -um great, big	mājor, mājus greater, bigger	maximus, -a, -um greatest, biggest
parvus, -a, -um small	minor, -us smaller	minimus, -a, -um smallest
juvenis, -is, -e young, youthful	jūnior, -ius & nātū minor younger	nātū minimus youngest
senex, -is old	senior, -ius & nātū mājor elder	nātū maximus eldest
multus, -a, -um much (<i>pl.</i> : many)	plūs* more	plūrimus, -a, -um most

* **plūs** in the singular is a neuter noun, declined thus: **plūs, plūris, plūrī, plūs, plūre**. So **plūs cibī** = more (of) food. In the plural it is an adjective: **plūrēs, plūra**, etc. So **plūrēs puellæ** = more girls. And **Ē plūribus ūnum** = Out of more (than one), one.

Adverbia

Adjectives of the a-/o-declension form their adverbs by adding the ending **-ē** to the stem. This ending does not change.

Examples: **studiōsus, -a, -um** **studiōsē labōrāre** to work diligently

but: **bonus, -a, -um** **bene** well
 good

alius, -a, -um **aliter** otherwise
 (an)other

Adjectives of the third declension form their adverbs by appending **-ter** to the stem. For adjectives whose stem ends in **-nt**, only **-er** is added.

Examples: **civilis, -e** **civiliter dicere** to speak publicly

prūdēns, -entis **prūdentē regere** to rule prudently

but: **facilis, -e** **facile** easily

difficilis, -e **difficulter** with difficulty, hard

audāx, -cis **audācter** boldly, courageously

Latin has many other adverbs (e.g., **frustrā** “erroneously, in vain,” **diū** “[for] long,” **citō** “fast,” **subitō** “suddenly,” etc.) which have to be memorized separately.

Comparison of Adverbs:

For the comparative degree of adverbs the nominative/accusative singular neuter **-ius** of the comparative of adjectives is used. As in the case of the positive degree, the comparative of the adverb is uninflected.

studiōsē => **studiōsius**
eagerly more eagerly

pulchrē => **pulchrius**
beautifully more beautifully

The adverbial superlative uses the ending **-issimē**, **-rimē**, or **-limē**, depending on the ending of the stem.

studiōsē eagerly	=>	studiōsissimē most eagerly
celeriter quick	=>	celerrimē most quickly
facile easily	=>	facillimē most easily